

**The Homily of Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar delivered on the
Occasion of the Founding of the Congregation of the Sister Servants
of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Dedication of Their Chapel**

Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, 1894

When the Lord Jesus entered the home of Zacheaus, he pronounced these words: "Today, salvation has come to this house" (Lk 19:9). In similar fashion, I consecrated this simple chapel in the name of His Eminence, the Archbishop, and I say with joy: "Today, salvation has come to this house" since to it has come our Divine Savior with all his power and all his love. Although hidden beneath the appearance of the Sacrament, he has come not only as a Priest in order to offer himself on this altar, but also as the Heavenly Guest to remain in this Sacramental dwelling day and night. Oh, how great and how ineffable a grace!

How right it is to give thanks for it from the depths of our hearts and to cry out with the prophet: "Acclaim the Lord for he is good, for his mercy endures forever" (Ps 117:1). How right it is - as much as our spirit allows us - to humble ourselves at the sight of this immeasurable graciousness of our Lord, and, running ahead toward him in the spirit of the centurion in the Gospel, to strike our contrite heart, saying, "Lord, we are not worthy to receive you under our roof." Finally, it is truly right for us like Zacchaeus to welcome the Lord with longing, while climbing the tree of prayer and virtue.

And why did the Lord come here? He has come in order to show his unending love, and to bring his blessing, and at the same time, his salvation to this house. He has come as a generous king to his subjects, as a tender father to his children, as a good lord to his household - this household gathered here for the first time in his name. Thus, he will be faithful to the promise he has given, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst" (Matthew 18:20). This household wants to dedicate itself to his Heart; therefore he opens his Heart to it, so as to pour out the effusions of his grace.

First of all I address these words to this household. Servants of the Heart of Jesus, remember, above all, that the Lord Jesus demands love in exchange for His boundless love. And how do we express this love?

Strive, above all, for true sanctification of soul, and eagerly climb the mountain of perfection in order to fulfill the Lord's command: "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). It is not enough for you to be satisfied with a lesser degree of virtue, rather you must climb the divine ladder which St. Francis, the great Servant of the Lord, set up in his rule; do not remain on the first rung, but climb higher and higher. It is not enough to fulfill perfectly the commandments of the Lord. You must also keep faithfully the evangelical counsels and the rules of the Congregation which have already been partially presented to you, and at the same time to be enamoured of poverty, chastity and obedience, self-denial, work and sacrifice.

It is not enough for you to care only for your own soul; each Christian must be an apostle. So all the more must be the soul dedicated to God, since it is a characteristic of true love that it not only burns as a fire in one's own soul, but tries to diffuse itself in order to inflame other souls, even if possible to embrace the entire world.

Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, your particular assignment must be to spread the devotion to the Divine Heart. More than two hundred years ago the Lord Jesus revealed the mystery of this Heart to Blessed Margaret Mary and, through her, to the world. Today this devotion has been spread widely throughout the world, however it is not so ardent and universal as the Savior himself desires, nor as the Church, his Spouse, is working toward. Therefore, let it be your concern, Servants of the Heart of Jesus, to return limitless love for his immeasurable love; to make expiation to the Lord for the insults he receives from so many of the blind and ungrateful; moreover, spread so far as you are able, the honor and love of the Heart of Jesus.

One of the most fervent desires of this Heart is that God's most Blessed Mother would be honored and loved by all. First, because the Lord himself loves her with an unspeakable love, and secondly, because he made her the Mother of all people, so that she, with her tenderness, would draw to herself even those who run from the cross, and would lead them to the Divine Heart. Servants of this Heart, honor this Mother, love this Mother, listen to and invoke this Mother, furthermore, enkindle honor and love for her in the souls of others. Since this Mother is Queen of our [Polish] nation - crowned solemnly on Jasna Gora - contribute therefore with all your strength to this - namely, that all our people would honor and love her, and her throne will shine brilliantly on our soil.

As if this were not enough, another very fervent desire of the Heart of Jesus is the sanctification of souls. For these souls the Savior came to earth; for them he ascended the cross, and from this cross he cried, "I thirst"; for them, he remained in the Mystery of the Altar. Whoever wants to be pleasing to the Lord Jesus should work with him for the sanctification of souls and thus to fulfill the apostolate - if not in the loud then in the quiet - the apostolate of prayer, the apostolate of penance, the apostolate of good example, the apostolate of sacrifice. Let this apostolate, Servants of the Heart of Jesus, be your sign. First, fulfill it toward servants and working girls; toward these poor souls, for they are endangered most often by moral and sometimes material poverty; toward these souls exposed to so many dangers and who often fall victim to human desire.

Embrace with constant care the shelters for servants and let this care be always performed in the spirit of God. Be for them true mothers; train them in virtues; protect them from evil; teach them different tasks; in a word, bring forth for society exemplary servants; this means those who are truly pious and at the same time diligent, submissive and conscious of their own obligations.

But this is not enough. The Heart of Jesus gives you one more obligation - to attend to the sick. Difficult is the lot of the bedridden due to pain and especially because of long lasting illness. This lot is bad when poverty is joined to sickness, but even worse still when, with the sick body, there is also a sick soul. You, therefore, must bring not only relief for the body - that is, to fulfill all necessary service and works - but you must also take care of their souls, to draw them to God by sweetness, prayer, example and dedication. In this dedication, do not disregard the bed of the poor or withdraw before any illness, even if it be hideous or contagious. You may say that I demand from you too great a sacrifice. Yet I can say: It is not I who demand, but the Lord himself who desires this; this Lord who became mercy for the poor; Bread of life for the

hungry; source of graces for the thirsty; physician and medicine for the sick; this Lord who promised already in the Old Covenant: "Neglect not to visit the sick - for these things you will be loved" (Sir 7:35). When among his apostolic work, St. Francis Xavier shed streams of sweat, he used to say to himself, smiling: "Let your sweat flow for the Lord. Someday he will wipe your forehead and give you the promised reward." Similarly for you, dear Daughters in Christ, he will not refuse the reward if only you will be dedicating yourself to the sick out of holy love for him.

And where to acquire such a love? Behold, in the Heart of Jesus, for It is the school of virtues, the seat of graces, the source of consolations, and the furnace of spiritual light and fire. "If only I could proclaim to the whole world," says Blessed Margaret Mary, "what a treasure of graces the Lord Jesus included in his Heart in order to give them to the souls who nourish honor and devotion to this Heart. I do not know if there is any devotional practice that would be able in such a short time to raise the soul to the heights of perfection." For religious this help is the most effective to sanctification, and to those who fulfill the apostolate of souls, it is the best means to bring them to contrition of heart and to gain them for God. Quickly therefore, let us go to the Heart of Jesus.

To you, devoted souls, who in any way contributed to the foundation of this new work of God, may thanks be given from the Congregation and blessing from the Heart of Jesus. You have given your offering to this Heart; may this Heart reward you – and certainly he will - because the Lord promised through the intercession of his faithful servant, Blessed Margaret Mary, "Those who will work for the propagation of the honor and love of the Heart of Jesus will find in this Heart plentiful help and graces for their state of life." Please continue to support the Congregation of the Servants of the Heart of Jesus in its devoted works and do as much good as is in your ability.

And you, Servants, thank God that he has inspired a separate Congregation that is watching over you and works for you. This Congregation has been called into being by God and to him only belongs the glory for it. But thanksgiving belongs also to these spiritual mothers who have opened their hearts for you and lead you to the Heart of Jesus. Show this gratefulness by love of devotion, perfect obedience, conscientious work, eager participation in given classes, and by exemplary conduct in service.

Concluding, I cast myself at your feet, Lord Jesus, and present to your Heart this small group of your servants. Enliven them with your love, give them the religious spirit, bless them in work and multiply their number. I am giving this group to your heart, Mother of fair love and holy hope. Lead these servants of yours to the Heart of Jesus. Implore for them light, consolation and strength, and cover them with your mantle in difficult moments and times of temptation. I am entrusting this group to your care, St. Joseph, Patron of the Church and our Patron. Teach them to pray, to work and to suffer. At the same time, provide with fatherly care for their spiritual and temporal needs, so that all of them would be pleasing to God and helpful to others. May the motto of their life be for all of them the words: "Glory be to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus!" Amen.